

Springtime Arrives: And, with it World Water Week 2010
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In 1973, our nation's last Federal water commission wrote: "Water is one of several resources without which a nation cannot satisfy the fundamental wants of its people or achieve the important national goals it sets for itself. Without water life cannot be sustained."

Water-related issues have been of interest to me for more than thirty years now. In fact, in 1978, I wrote an article that predicted that water would be one of the two great issues of the 21st century. With this notion in mind, I would like to share some distressing figures with you provided by the World Water Council:

- More than one billion people lack access to safe water resources;
- More than three million people die each year around the world from water-related illness;
- 85% of water-related deaths are in children ages 0–14; and
- 98% of water-related deaths occur in the developing world.

We have to get our hands around this.

Water is a focus of difficulty across the planet. It seems today that every policy expert has a proposed solution to the problem. But, those solutions mean little in countries that are ravaged by oppression, terrorism, and tyranny. We ought to make it our goal to get water to the people around the world who live in failed states and have brutal and short lives. That means we have to do two things: we must 1) continue democracy promotion; and 2) reform our strategic foreign aid and humanitarian assistance.

We have to encourage freedom around the world first. The world has enough water to supply its population.

Free countries just have to manage the resource more efficiently for future generations. My goals for our own country consist of three major elements: 1) conservation; 2) increased storage, above and below ground; and 3) reduction of the burdensome regulatory system and political interest in sustaining the lives of animals over humans, which are both rapidly changing the delivery and allocation of our water resources.

Tyrannical countries, on the other hand, control their citizens by limiting access to clean water. They do not allow water resources to be developed. The water is there, but few people are provided access to use it, and what is made available is often not potable. In his book, *The Ultimate Resource*, Julian Simon said that "People were the ultimate resource." Given an opportunity to achieve and keep what they produce, they do wonderfully. Africa is one of the richest continents in the world, but its people do poorly because their resources are controlled by

totalitarian dictators. Most Africans are continually afflicted with water-borne illnesses. They can't go to school and they can't work because they are too sick.

The Middle East is fraught with water problems, but we are making progress. In March 2006, I traveled to Iraq with the Georgia Battalion. One of the generals told me a story about his involvement in bringing clean drinking water to the country's citizens. When he arrived in Iraq, he said that people in the city drank water from the street. They were always sick and they died young. One of his reservists built water plants in South Georgia. He said "I can fix this," and he did. By simply treating and transporting clean water to these communities, we dramatically improved the health of the population.

We also need to think ahead. We need to develop more water storage, sooner. I cannot stress enough the importance of water capture and storage. Ethiopia experienced a particularly severe drought in 2003 that lasted for several years. One of the main reasons the country didn't fall into complete disarray was because it had stored its previous rainfall in advance. Australia is considered to have one of the best capture and storage systems in the world. They do not have a choice. There is little rainfall there too, but they know that they must capture and reuse water often. Today, Australia is winning its battle against drought.

In 2008, Jean Ziegler, the Vice-President of the UN Human Rights Council's Advisory Committee, wrote a report concluding that we could provide fresh drinking water and sanitation to everyone in the developing world and beyond for about \$50 billion a year. Much of the misery on this planet is caused by lack of access to fresh water. I would support U.S. government funding to fix that. It is simply a matter of transport and storage. We have to move water from one area to another.

Washington, D.C. does a good job at addressing one issue at a time. Unfortunately, water resources management is not the current topic of interest. For World Water Week 2010, however, I would encourage my colleagues to think ahead and make this issue one of concern to them. Providing clean water to the 1.6 billion people who do not have it is not only our moral duty, but I believe it is also a necessary strategic tool in our nation's fight against disease and lack of economic progress around the globe.